

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GE, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SIEBER'S MEETING WITH UNDER SECRETARY
ROBINSON

REF: BERLIN 5316

1.) AMBASSADOR SIEBER CALLED ON UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON
FEBRUARY 28, FOR THIRTY MINUTE DISCUSSION OF US-GDR ECONOMIC
RELATIONS. ATMOSPHERE WAS FRIENDLY AND RELAXED.

2.) AMBASSADOR SIEBER BEGAN BY STRESSING GDR'S READINESS
TO DEVELOP CLOSER BILATERAL TRADE TIES AND TO CONCLUDE
TRADE AGREEMENT WITH US. NOTING TRADE BILL MADE THIS MORE
DIFFICULT, HE ASKED FOR ASSESSMENT OF WHEN TRADE BILL MIGHT
BE AMENDED. SIEBER WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHETHER
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US MIGHT BE READY TO START TRADE TALKS IN SECOND HALF OF

THE YEAR. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE RAISED RECENT MEETING BETWEEN AMBASSADOR COOPER AND SED FIRST SECRETARY HONECKER NOTING THAT BOTH SIDES HAD EXPRESSED READINESS AT MEETING TO DEEPEN RELATIONS NOT ONLY IN POLITICAL FIELD BUT IN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL AREAS AS WELL.

3.) UNDER SECRETARY REVIEWED PAST DEVELOPMENTS ON TRADE BILL. HE REMARKED THAT ADMINISTRATION SHARES HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS RAISED BY CONGRESS, BUT FAVORS PLACING TRADE ON PRACTICAL BASIS. TALKS CURRENTLY ARE UNDERWAY WITH CONGRESS TO ACHIEVE REVISED BILL, WITH SITUATION IN HOUSE SOMEWHAT MORE PROMISING THAN IN SENATE. UNDER SECRETARY DECLINED PREDIC; WHEN TRADE BILL REVISIONS MIGHT BE ACHIEVED BUT EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT CHANGES WILL OCCUR WHICH WILL GIVE ADMINISTRATION MORE FLEXIBILITY IN TRADE AREA. ON QUESTION OF WHETHER TRADE TALKS WITH GDR COULD START THIS YEAR, UNDER SECRETARY INDICATED HE WISHED AVOID HARD AND FAST PREDICTIONS. HE HAD NOT YET HAD CHANCE TO SEE REPORT OF COOPER-HONECKER TALKS. IT WAS US INTENTION TO PROCEED ON STEP BY STEP BASIS AND THERE ARE MANY AREAS WHERE BOTH SIDES COULD MOVE NOW TO BUILD FOUNDATION OF DEEPER RELATIONSHIP.

4.) SIEBER THEN MOVED TO DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC TRADE MATTERS. HE SAID THAT SOME GDR FOREIGN TRADE AND INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES WOULD LIKE TO OPEN TECHNICAL/ COMMERCIAL OFFICES IN US AND ASKED WHETHER THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE AND WHAT STEPS GDR WOULD HAVE TO TAKE. HE ALSO ASKED WHETHER SUCH ORGANIZATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE PART OF COMMERCIAL OFFICE OF EMBASSY OR COULD BE SET UP AS INDEPENDENT OFFICES OUTSIDE EMBASSY, MENTIONING NEW YORK AS POSSIBILITY. HE ADDED THAT THIS MIGHT BE STEP WHICH COULD TAKE PLACE IN SECOND HALF OF YEAR. SIEBER REMARKED THAT GDR EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAD ALREADY VISITED MACHINE TOOL BUILDERS ASSOCIATION IN WASHINGTON AND THAT PERHAPS MUTUAL COOPERATION COULD BE WORKED OUT WITH THEM. SIEBER ALSO EXPRESSED IMPORTANCE WHICH GDR ATTRIBUTES TO CHANGING US LABELING REQUIREMENTS SO AS TO IDENTIFY GOODS AS "MADE IN GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC" RATHER THAN "EAST GERMANY".

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5.) UNDER SECRETARY REPLIED THAT US WOULD TAKE BOTH MATTERS UNDER STUDY AND PROVIDE GDR WITH REPLY IN DUE COURSE. ON LABELING QUESTION, HE NOTED THAT THIS WAS A POLITICAL ISSUE AND THAT LEGAL PROVISIONS ALSO COMPLICATE QUESTION AND HE COULD NOT ASSURE POSITIVE RESPONSE. HOWEVER, IN LONG RUN, US FAVORS DEVELOPMENT COMMERCIAL TRADE RELATIONS FREE FROM POLITICAL INCUMBRANCES.

6.) RESPONDING TO QUESTION, SIEBER NOTED THAT US-GDR
TRADE OUTLOOK SEEMS LIMITED FOR NEAR FUTURE. FACT THAT
TOTAL US-GDR TRADE LESS THAN ONE-TENTH OF TRADE BETWEEN
TWO GERMAN STATES SHOWS EXTENT TO WHICH TRADE NEEDS TO BE
IMPROVED. UNDER SECRETARY ALLUDED TO LARGE INCREASE IN
US-SOVIET TRADE IN PAST THREE YEARS ONCE DECISION HAD
BEEN MADE TO MOVE AHEAD AND NOTED THAT US CONTINUES ITS
COMMITMENT TO DETENTE. HE ADDED THAT US AGREES ON
IMPORTANCE OF COMMERCIAL RELATIONS, BUT WISHES TO MOVE
AHEAD SLOWLY AND STEADILY LAYING GOOD BASIS FIRST.
THIS TYPE OF GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT IS BEST WAY TO BUILD
REALLY FIRM AND LASTING RELATIONSHIP. KISSINGER

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